

Scott AFB, IL

# Scott Spouses Newsletter

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## I Got Your Back

A poem by Autumn Parker, 5th Special Forces Army Spouse (from [www.airforceonesource.com](http://www.airforceonesource.com))

I am a small and precious  
child, my dad's been sent to  
fight...

The only place I'll see his  
face, is in my dreams at  
night.

He will be gone too many  
days for my young mind to  
keep track.

I may be sad, but I am proud.  
My daddy's got your back.

I am a caring mother; my son  
has gone to war...

My mind is filled with wor-  
ries that I have never known  
before.

Everyday I try to keep my thoughts from turning  
black.

I may be scared, but I am proud.  
My son has got your back.



I am a strong and loving wife,  
with a husband soon to go.

There are times I'm terrified,  
in a way most never know.

I bite my lip, and force a  
smile, as I watch my husband  
pack...

My heart may break, but I am  
proud.

My husband's got your  
back...

I am a soldier...

Serving proudly, standing  
tall.

I fight for freedom, yours and  
mine, by answering this call.

I do my job while knowing, the thanks it sometimes  
lacks.

Say a prayer that I'll come home.  
It's me who's got your back.

## Expeditionary Spouse Calendar for January 2004

Date	Event	Phone
7	Deployed Spouse Meeting Brown Bag Lunch, 1130-1230 at Family Support	256-8668
9	Give Parents a Break at CDC and Youth Center	256-8668
10	Domestic Violence Awareness Shelter Charity Fundraiser, 1800-2000 at Base Theater	229-3011
15	Key Spouse Meeting, 1800 at Family Support Center	256-8668
22	Expeditionary Spouse Town Hall Meeting at Rockwell Hall	256-8668



## When Your Loved Ones Deploy in War Time: Coping with Anxiety

Deployment of our loved ones requires the development of strong coping skills. Many military spouses and extended family members have learned to cope with the stresses of a routine deployment. But when a loved one is deployed to a combat situation, it is a whole different ballgame. Combat situations mean less communication with our loved ones, and less knowledge about where they are and what they are doing. The media is filled with projections about possible casualties and images of bombings. Suddenly, fears develop about the safety of our military family members that are much more intense than ever before. People tell you don't worry, but you may develop a feeling of constant anxiety, sleep disturbance, or panic attacks, and wonder if you are going crazy. You're not! But you do need to start utilizing the following tips to help you minimize and control your anxiety.

### **What can spouses and extended family members do to reduce anxiety and fear?**

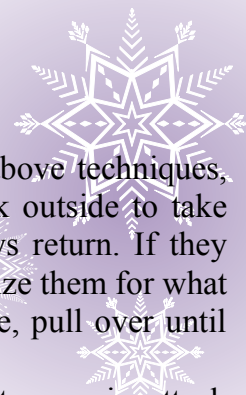
- Focus on a daily routine. Familiar habits are comforting.
- Develop a daily ritual time in which you focus on your loved one. Some people choose the first thing in the morning, others the evenings before bed. Take several minutes to relax, taking deep breaths and focusing your thoughts on a pleasant time, feeling, or special ritual that you have with your loved one. Gaze at their picture. Relive a happy moment and truly focus all your positive energy for 3 minutes on your loved one's image. As you close, send them a spiritual message in your mind that they are loved. Depending on your spiritual beliefs, you may choose to pray for their safety. Imagine yourself shaking loose your worries and fears as you breathe deeply and go on with your normal activities.
- Make sure you get enough rest and sleep. If you are having troubles sleeping, make sure that you are following proper sleep hygiene

techniques, such as keeping the room temperature at 68 degrees, avoiding exercise or caffeine in the hours before bedtime, and avoiding TV programs or movies that may stimulate your fear.

- Eat healthy food and time to walk, stretch, exercise and relax, even if just for a few minutes at a time.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, illicit drugs, and caffeine. Although people often increase their use of these substances when stressed, they only increase anxiety.
- Do not spend all your time listening to or watching the news. Check the news periodically, but otherwise turn off the news reports. Distract yourself by playing relaxing music at home or in the car, or by doing something you enjoy.
- Spend time with other people if this helps you. Some people actually prefer to be alone, but typically coping with stressful events is easier when people support each other.
- Find something positive you can do, such as pack gift boxes for service members, or donate blood.
- Make time each day to do something for yourself that feels good, such as taking a warm bath, taking a walk, enjoying a good meal. Take your children to a playground. If you don't have children, go to a playground and watch children- you can't help but smile at their joyfulness.
- Ask for support from your family, friends, church or community groups.

### **Special techniques you can use to reduce anxiety:**

- Breathing exercises: Position yourself comfortably in a sitting position. Close your eyes and focus on how your body feels. Take deep slow breaths and focus on your breathing, in and out. Do this for at least 10 minutes.
- Muscle relaxation: Sit comfortably or rest ly-



ing down. Close your eyes and beginning with your toes, begin to contract your muscle groups for 10 seconds at a time each (toes, feet, calves, thighs, pelvis, abdomen, chest, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, and fingers). Relax each muscle group before you proceed to the next. Sit quietly after finishing for 10 seconds, then open your eyes.

- Cognitive relaxation: Close your eyes and imagine yourself on a warm sunny beach. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin, listen to the wave sounds, focus on how relaxed you feel for several minutes.

### **What to do if you have a panic attack:**

- Panic attacks can be scary when you don't know what they are. Sometimes when anxiety and fears are high, you may find yourself feeling an acute sense of doom, associated with a racing heart, feeling like you can't get enough air, chest pain, dizziness or nausea. As scary as they are while they are going on, panic attacks will pass, usually in 2-3 minutes, although they seem to last much longer in your mind.



that these episodes are not based on a physical problem such as heart or lung disease. If (s)he agrees that they sound like panic attacks, then take the following steps the next time one occurs:

- Recognize that it is a panic attack and that you are not going to die. Concentrate on slowing down your breathing and on taking deep breaths. If you are in a crowded place, walk to a less crowded area. Panic attacks may happen in a grocery store while standing in line- if

they don't subside with the above techniques, just leave your cart and walk outside to take deep breaths. You can always return. If they happen while driving, recognize them for what they are. If they don't subside, pull over until they do.

- Once people recognize what a panic attack feels like, many of them are able to work through them. However, if your panic attacks increase in frequency and severity and begin interfering with your daily living, see a health care provider. There are medications which are quite successful in the treatment of Panic Disorder, and many mental health clinics have anxiety groups to teach you skills to deal with the panic attacks.

### **When to see a health care provider:**

- If your anxiety and fears persist or worsen despite utilizing the techniques mentioned above for several weeks.
- If you continue to experience significant sleep problems or overwhelming anxiety throughout the day which interferes with your ability to function in your daily life.
- If you begin having physical symptoms related to stress, such as frequent severe headaches, nausea, diarrhea, or muscle tension.

### **Summary:**

In short, the anxiety and fears that occur when our loved ones are deployed during wartime is natural. Much of these fears can be reduced by using the techniques we have discussed. But if you are experiencing difficulty completing your daily life activities due to extreme anxiety or worry, see your health care provider for an evaluation, and check out your local Family Services Center for support.

*By Capt Jennifer Berg, MC, USN*

*From the Deployment Connections web site at <http://www.deploymentconnections.org>*

## Free Membership

The LEU Civic Center in Mascoutah (a United Way Agency) is offering a free membership and 6 weeks of instructional indoor soccer camp (ages 4-12) for families with a deployed spouse. Membership allows you use of the facilities (game room, gym, and homework/computer room) during business hours Monday-Saturday and gives you the opportunity to be in organized classes at a lower rate. Please visit the Leu Civic Center to register for your family membership and soccer camp. For more information, contact director Patty Peek at:



Leu Civic Center, Inc.  
213 N. Market Street  
Mascoutah, IL 62258  
(618) 566-2175

## Operation Homelink™

Operation Homelink™ provides free refurbished computers to either parents or spouses of deployed service men and women in the ranks of E-1 through E-5. The program enables e-mail communications between families and their loved ones deployed outside of the continental United States.



Operation Homelink™ received 501(c)(3) certification from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service; their Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) is 91-2186796. Operation Homelink™ is incorporated in the state of Illinois as a Not-For Profit (NFP) (#6273-688-7).

To request a computer, donate equipment, or learn more about the program, visit their web site at <http://www.operationhomelink.org/index.shtml>

## Helpful Web Sites



### AIR FORCE OneSource

<http://www.airforceonesource.com>

US Air Force offers you access to Air Force OneSource Online, where you can find help to cope with life's little -- and not so little -- issues. Click on a topic of interest under the *How May We Help You?* heading, or use the key word search. You can access informative articles, helpful tools, audio tips on hundreds of specific topics, and much more.

Choose from several monthly e-mail newsletters covering a variety of topics, post a message to any of the many bulletin boards, take a self-assessment quiz, or even speak to an Air Force OneSource consultant toll-free about issues related to military life.

Log on initially with the User ID: *airforce* and Password: *ready*. After a series of simple questions (branch of service, base location, etc.), you will be given the opportunity to choose a unique ID and password for future visits.

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### SGT. MOM'S

<http://www.sgtmoms.com/home.asp>

Military Life explained by a Military Wife! A non-official site designed and maintained by a military spouse. Everyone is welcome. Provides a variety of resources, including links, news, poems, and support groups.

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### Parents: The Anti-Drug

<http://www.theantidrug.com>

TheAntiDrug.com was created by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign to equip parents and other adult caregivers with the tools they need to raise drug-free kids. Working with the nation's leading experts in the fields of parenting and substance abuse prevention, the Campaign hopes TheAntiDrug.com will serve not only as a drug prevention information center, but also as a supportive community for parents to interact and learn from each other.